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The Elder Ephraim of Arizona They Dare Not Quote: When Your “Saint” Condemns Ecumenism and the WCC

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In 2023, while researching, writing, and compiling the *Orthodox Patristic Witness Concerning Catholicism* for Uncut Mountain Press, I came across an obscure and long-forgotten book published in 1991 by New Sarov Press with the blessing of then Bishop Hilarion (Kapral), the future Metropolitan of ROCOR. The book, titled *A Call from the Holy Mountain*, had been written and published by the Monastery of Philotheou on Mount Athos and authored by the now well-known “resist from within” elder, Ephraim of Philotheou and Arizona. At that point in my research, I was examining elders who had not been formally canonized but were still regarded as holy and who had written forcefully against Ecumenism. The discovery therefore struck me as entirely providential, arriving precisely when I needed firsthand anti-ecumenist testimony. It seemed to fit seamlessly into the thematic structure I was developing.





Within *A Call from the Holy Mountain* there are two brief but striking chapters that confront the pan-heresy of ecumenism, the World Council of Churches, and the broader array of non-Orthodox religions. The chapters, titled “The Church Has No Place Among the Conglomeration of Errors and Heresies: Ecumenism” and “Let Us Not Deceive Ourselves; Between Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy There Exists an Enormous Gap,” aligned directly with the anti-papist material I was assembling for Uncut Mountain Press. Recognizing their relevance, I approached Father Peter Heers about including them in the *Orthodox Patristic Witness*. To my surprise, he immediately told me that we could not incorporate the material. This was unexpected, especially given how revered “Elder Ephraim” and Saint Anthony’s Monastery are within the Orthodox Ethos circle.

Father Peter then explained that although the text was genuinely written by Father Ephraim of Arizona, the Monastery of Saint Anthony’s would deny that he was the author. This was difficult to understand, given that the book had been originally published by the Monastery of Philotheou in Greek and later in English with the blessing of Bishop Hilarion (Kapral) of ROCOR. Father Peter further clarified that Father Ephraim had written the text while serving as abbot of Philotheou Monastery on Mount Athos, and that its authenticity was well known to those familiar with the situation. He himself had reliable confirmation through a close family friend in Greece, the owner of the famous Orthodox publishing house Orthodox Kypseli, who had personally seen the original Greek manuscript and affirmed that it was unquestionably authored by Father Ephraim.

Naturally, I asked why the monastery would deny authorship of a text that offered such a powerful witness against the papist and against ecumenism. Father Peter responded that Saint Anthony's would continue to deny Elder Ephraim's authorship because the text was unapologetically anti-ecumenist, and the monastery did not want to jeopardize the possibility of his future canonization. Publishing material that stood in direct contradiction to the ecumenical positions of the Ecumenical Patriarchate would create serious conflict. For this reason, even though both Uncut Mountain Press and Father Peter personally wished to include the text in the *Orthodox Patristic Witness*, they refrained for fear of provoking the Arch-Heresiarchs in Constantinople and in New York at GOARCH headquarters. Consequently, I was not permitted to include the text in the final volume.

Today, in the published volume of the *Orthodox Patristic Witness Concerning Catholicism*, the section devoted to the "contemporary elders" of World Orthodoxy includes figures such as Philotheos Zervakos, Cleopa of Romania, Athanasios Mitilinaios, Arsenie Papacioc of Romania, Justin Parvu of Romania, and Gabriel of Koutloumousiou Monastery on Mount Athos. What is notably absent, however, is any anti-ecumenist or anti-papal writing from Ephraim of Philotheou and Arizona. Anyone familiar with Father Peter Heers, Uncut Mountain Press, or the Orthodox Ethos circle will immediately recognize how striking this omission is, given the near-worship they express toward Father Ephraim. During my stay at Father Peter's home in Florence, Arizona, he even remarked to me that "the words of Elder Ephraim here in Florence are Gospel." With such devotion to this New Calendarist elder, his exclusion from the volume is difficult to overlook.

As I have already explained, the reason for this omission lies in the fact that the bishops who oversee Father Ephraim's monastery are themselves committed to ecumenism, the very thing he denounced in his writings. Because of this, the monastery could not risk allowing such material to circulate publicly. In essence, the Monastery of Saint Anthony's desires the canonization of their elder by the Arch-Heresiarch in Constantinople to such an extent that they are willing to conceal the truth. They choose to hide the writings of their elder in order to secure approval from the same bishops they have privately described as ecumenist heretics. This creates a stark contradiction between their outward reverence and their quiet caution, revealing how far they are prepared to go in pursuit of the outcome they seek.

In this text from Father Ephraim, he writes from a clearly anti-ecumenist standpoint and openly rejects the ecclesiastical positions currently held by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, and now Saint Anthony's Monastery itself. His words leave no room for doubt concerning his views on the pan-heresy of ecumenism or the institutions that advance it, reflecting the convictions he held at the time of writing. The consistency of his language in this earlier period demonstrates a direct and unmistakable opposition to the modern ecumenical stance embraced by these jurisdictions. It is important to note, however, that after returning to the Ecumenical Patriarchate later in life, Father Ephraim never again publicly voiced such criticisms, which marks a notable contrast with the boldness of his earlier writings. For this reason, the chapters stand as a powerful witness to his earlier theological perspective. The two chapters by Father Ephraim read in full:

The Church Has No Place Among The Conglomeration Of Errors and Heresies: Ecumenism

The rule is that where much is being said about a virtue, that virtue is not to be found there. The voice raised in favor of that virtue is the cry of its absence. This is the case with the "love" of all those who believe that they should contribute towards the realization of the Lord's wish "that they all may be one."

Let us be more specific. They say that we Orthodox should unite with the Roman Catholics and then with the Protestants and with all the known and unknown heresies conceived by the Devil in the name of Christianity. After all Christians without exception unite, they should then unite with the Mohammedans, the Jews and in extension with the Buddhists, Brahmins, Shintoists and with all the religions of the universe in general.

This pan-heretical alchemy is being inspired through the so-called World Council of Churches. We think that the term is not true to the fact, for it does not concern a World Council of Churches but a World Council of Will Worship. The only god to demand a tribute of worship there will be the fallen Beelzebub who through his representative amongst men, the Antichrist, will try to substitute his own will for the faith and worship of the true God. For in Ecumenism there is no personal God; for consistent ecumenists the doctrine of the Trinitarian God is utterly rejectable.

It is well known that the devil-instigated Zionism is coordinating two insidious operations both within and without the Church aspiring to one and the same end; to destroy the fortress known as Orthodoxy.

Papists, Protestants, Jehovah Witnesses, Freemasons, Unionists, Ecumenists and any other "root of bitterness" —all these have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of Lords, and King of Kings: and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful."

We believe that Orthodoxy has no place among this conglomeration of errors and heresies. This insidious "ecumenical fabrication does not wish to seek out the truth but", according to Father Haralambos Vasilopoulos, "is a mixture aimed at exterminating the Truth. It is an effort not for those that have been deceived to find the truth but for those that do have it to lose it; that is, those who believe in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church."

Let Us Not Deceive Ourselves; Between Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy There Exists an Enormous Gap

When even the champion of the World Council of Churches, Metropolitan Meliton of Chalcedon, is forced to admit: "It is an undoubted fact that the W.C.C. is 99% under the control of Protestantism and strongly carries its mark," what more evidence do we Orthodox need to sever relations with them before we crush any hope left in them that the truth really exists unique, intact and lucid to be found in the One, Holy, Orthodox Church of Christ?

The strong position taken up by Father George Florovsky that "Orthodoxy's mission is to be a martyr and 'bear witness unto the truth'", may be fulfilled only with an Orthodox Ecumenism described by Father Spyridon Bilialis in his book, Orthodoxy and Papism. "We believe that it is high time that the Orthodox Church came forth united before the world and promoted its own Orthodox Ecumenism by setting up purely orthodox ecumenical rostrums where from in loud voices it would proclaim *urbi et orbi* that Orthodoxy alone is today the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ."

Otherwise, with this frequentation of such Church Representatives with today's heterodox and tomorrow's atheists, Orthodoxy will run the risk of suffering what Saint Gregory the Theologian said happened in similar cases: "It is easier for one to be infected by iniquity than for him to transmit a virtue; just as it is easier for you to contract a sickness than to have health bestowed on you."

"Let us not deceive ourselves. Between Orthodoxy and heterodoxy there stands an enormous gap," says Professor Andreas Theodorou.

"But can't Christian love bridge this gap?" many ask. Love, my dear brethren, is omnipotent, as mighty as death, but its strength always goes hand in hand with truth. God transmits the power of His love when He is worshipped "in Spirit and in Truth." The disciple of love, the Apostle of Orthodoxy, setting down the words of His Epistle, says: "The elder unto the elect lady (i.e., the Church) and her children whom I love in the truth..." "Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love." All those who truly believe, love in truth; those who do not truly believe, love in hypocrisy. We, being Orthodox Christians, love everyone and desire that they come to realize the truth. Thus, were we taught by "the God of Love"; thus is our conscience set at rest. We feel no animosity against any men because of their heresy or their faithlessness, but we shall never come to love faithlessness or heresy for the sake of men, because if we do we shall be alienated from God.

One Sunday, a preacher delivered a sermon on "love your enemies." On the Sunday after, he spoke against alcohol addiction — about the havoc it wrought among the Christian peoples. Incidentally, the infamous Zionists greatly boast about this in their notorious 'Protocols.' When the preacher, then, referred to drinking and described its effects as mortal foes, one of the "smart" listeners who, by the way, are never missing, stopped him short and said: "Father, didn't you say last Sunday to love your enemies?" The preacher calmly answered, "I told you to love them. I didn't say you should swallow them."

Something similar is happening with us Orthodox in relation to all non-Orthodox. We love them in all sincerity and pray for them, remembering the admonition of Saint Ignatios the God-bearer: "also pray without ceasing for other men; for there is hope for repentance in them, that they may come to realize God." We love them so that they may renounce heresy, error, faithlessness, and wickedness. But we cannot assimilate them as they are, piecemeal with their heresy, their error and their atheism [1].

As we can see here, these words could almost be mistaken for something written by a present-day "Old Calendarist," given their staunch confession of Orthodoxy against the pan-heresy of Ecumenism and specifically the World Council of Churches. From Father Ephraim's writing in 1991, it is evident that the World Council of Churches was not something he dismissed or treated lightly, unlike many modern World Orthodox public figures today. He recognized clearly that the WCC was not only a heretical Protestant organization, but that those who participated in it were not worshipping Christ; rather, he stated that they were worshipping Beelzebub and the Antichrist. His words leave no ambiguity about the seriousness with which he regarded this ecumenical movement.

We all know now that after 1991 Father Ephraim returned to the heretical Ecumenical Patriarchate following his brief period within the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, and it is understood that this return was influenced by threats and pressure from individuals within the Ecumenical Patriarchate and from others throughout World Orthodoxy. In the forthcoming volume by Saint Anthony's Monastery, *Sent by God*, the monastery details Father Ephraim's short stay in ROCOR and his subsequent return to the Patriarchate of Constantinople, which they themselves acknowledge as part of his historical journey. In a publicly posted preview of this book that addresses this specific episode in Father Ephraim's time in ROCOR, they write:

With the Russian Church Abroad

When Geronda Ephraim arrived in New York, he was welcomed as an honored guest among friends by Archbishop Vitaly and the other bishops and clergy of the Russian Church Abroad. On May 19, 1991, Geronda Ephraim was invited to concelebrate the liturgical services of the Feast of Pentecost at the Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, New York. About two dozen of his Greek Orthodox spiritual children accompanied him.

Holy Trinity Monastery in Jordanville, New York, 1991.

The Liturgy was an historic event within the Orthodox Church. Moreover, Athanasios Lykos relates that during Holy Communion, a wondrous miracle occurred:

After the Divine Liturgy, the bishops and monks came out of the church, and as soon as Geronda came out of the church, there were several monks standing outside waiting for him. When they saw Geronda, they started shouting in Greek: “Agios, Agios!” that is, “Saint, Saint!” I didn’t know why they were saying that, but I assumed something had happened inside the altar during the Liturgy.

Persecution from within

Later, the abbot of the monastery told us that during the Liturgy, first Archbishop Vitaly received Holy Communion. When it was Geronda Ephraim’s turn to receive the Body and Blood of Christ, everyone in the altar saw him surrounded by the Uncreated Light. He was entirely illuminated—his whole body was radiating and emitting light. That is why when Geronda came out they were shouting, “Agios!” It was an unforgettable sign of them of Geronda Ephraim’s sanctity.

Scandalous public persecution

When word got out that Geronda Ephraim was now a member of the Russian Church Abroad, an outrageous uproar ensued. The devil stirred up the situation with an eye to permanently dismantle Geronda’s work in America. Greek Orthodox newspapers under sway of the influential people who diametrically opposed Geronda Ephraim’s presence in North America, began slinging mountains of mud, labeling Geronda, among other things, “a heretic for uncanonically joining a schismatic group”—a dual falsehood since he had obtained his release documents from Philotheou, and the Russian Church Abroad was always in communion with, for example, the Jerusalem and Serbian Patriarchates. The accusations were both unfair and brutal, and spread quickly around the Orthodox world: Geronda Ephraim, the former abbot of Philotheou Monastery, is now a schismatic who has fallen into delusion and heresy. It became a catchphrase in the Orthodox press: “Father Ephraim, the schismatic heretic.”

The editor of the popular Greek tabloid newspaper The National Herald published a series of yellow journalism articles harshly condemning Geronda Ephraim in the most inappropriate manner, even demanding that Geronda not only be defrocked but also prohibited from even wearing the garb of a monk, and to be placed under house arrest in his monastery—outlandish and ludicrous things, to say the least. “They were fantasizing about what they would do to me,” Geronda relates. “The blessed editor of the Greek newspaper The National Herald, whose soul is going to be sanctified and will bear myrrh, wrote that the Patriarchate would lock me up for seven years, and that they would give me such a drastic penance that I would not even be allowed to wear a raso. ‘Father Ephraim will be wearing pants!’” [2].

First, I need to address this page excerpt’s claim that the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia was in communion with the Jerusalem and Serbian Patriarchates. This assertion is repeatedly circulated by various New Calendarist jurisdictions in an effort to dismiss ROCOR’s actual historical record, which clearly shows that during this period, especially under Saint Vitaly (Ustinov), ROCOR did not maintain communion with World Orthodoxy. The historical reality is that the Russian Church Abroad was in fact in and out of communion with the Greek, Bulgarian, and Romanian Old Calendarists throughout the presidencies of Saints Philaret and Vitaly. This is precisely why Father Ephraim was accused of becoming a schismatic when he joined ROCOR, since it was well known at the time that ROCOR was not in communion with World Orthodoxy. This is thoroughly demonstrated in my twenty-page research article entitled “*The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad & The Local Churches: Were They in Communion with Serbia and Jerusalem?*” which documents these relationships in detail.



The real question is this: if Father Ephraim was so adamantly against any participation in the pan-heresy of ecumenism and the heretical Protestant organization of the World Council of Churches, which he himself said worships Beelzebub and the Antichrist, why does this same monastery remain in communion with the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (GOARCH), whose two primates are among the most heretical and ecumenist in the Orthodox world? Why do those in World Orthodox jurisdictions, both priests and laity, scoff at the World Orthodox patriarchates' participation in the WCC, when it was clearly taught by their own beloved elder, before his capitulation before the Ecumenical

Patriarchate, that to remain in spiritual and prayerful communion with this heretical Protestant organization is nothing less than worshipping the devil himself?

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GREEK ORTHODOX Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

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Orthodox churches (Eastern)

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ORTHODOX Church in America

Orthodox churches (Eastern)

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Orthodox Church in Japan

Orthodox churches (Eastern)

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Orthodox churches (Eastern)

WCC Member Since : 1966

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Orthodox churches (Eastern)

WCC Member Since : 1982

Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church

Orthodox churches (Eastern)

WCC Member Since : 1961

Romanian Orthodox Church

Orthodox churches (Eastern)

WCC Member Since : 1961

Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)

Orthodox churches (Eastern)

WCC Member Since : 1961

Serbian Orthodox Church

Orthodox churches (Eastern)

WCC Member Since : 1965

Maybe it is time that you conduct your own research and thoroughly examine what exactly the World Council of Churches is and why Father Ephraim had such a severe reaction toward it before he was ultimately beaten into submission to the very same heretical Patriarchate in Constantinople that is a member of the World Council of Churches.

References

- [1]. Father Ephraim of Arizona, *A Call to the Holy Mountain* (Blanco: New Sarov Press, 1991), 42-46.
- [2]. Saint Anthony's Greek Orthodox Monastery, *Sent by God* (Florence: Saint Anthony's Monastery, TBD), 444-45.

